

Daily Nebraskan
University of Nebraska-Lincoln

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On behalf of the Congressional Committee, faces up to 10 years in prison for shredding documents, accepting an illegal gratuity and one count of aiding and abetting in an obstruction of Congress.

But hero or not, he did break the law. And all three of these convictions are minor punishments for his illegal actions.

According to The Associated Press, the charges against North dealt not with his efforts to arm the Contras at a time when the U.S. Congress had ordered all aid stopped. Instead, the charges dealt with the former National Security Council aide's attempts to cover up those efforts.

North, the former Marine, used as his defense that he had loyally carried out the wishes of his commander-in-chief, then President Ronald Reagan.

Maybe the jury believed this story, so they didn't want to punish him at all. But maybe the jury felt they had to punish someone for the illegal activities, so they convicted him on the minor counts.

North was indeed a scapegoat in the matter; he took the rap for what Reagan and then Vice President George Bush should be tried for. But if Congress and the courts wanted to use him as a scapegoat, why didn't they punish him more seriously?

So much money was put into the congressional hearings and this trial, it is disappointing that no one was brought to justice.

Apparently people in Washington don't respect the law. They just pretend that they are concerned about how the president of the United States and other government higher-ups divert funds, bargain with the Iranians who have held this nation at gunpoint with hostages, and spend millions of dollars illegally.

They just let the lawbreakers go.

And when they do decide to give lip service to the law, they go after the honeybee in the hornets' nest.

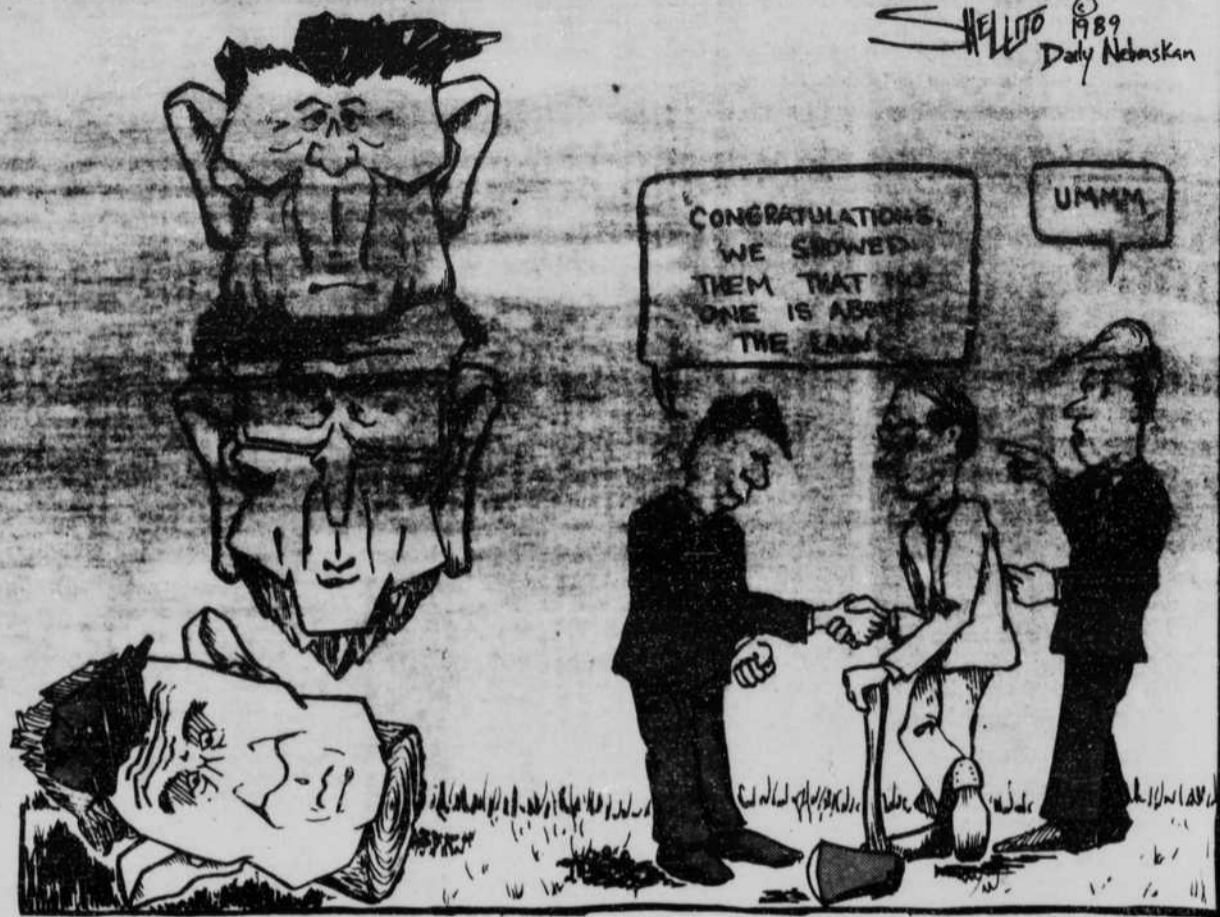
Oliver North is indeed a hero, someone who followed orders and is getting punished, sort of, for it. During the trial, North stood where Reagan and Bush should have been, and didn't mind taking the rap.

But North doesn't need to be too concerned, because he'll either be pardoned or paroled before he misses his wife too much. He will be able to lecture on a circuit, commanding thousands of dollars for his speeches.

And North doesn't need to be concerned because those he's protecting will repay him for his services.

There is no justice in America, if the criminals are in the capital.

-- Curt Wagner
for the Daily Nebraskan



Break the law, pay the price

Donovan learns about the county's penal system the hard way

It just goes to show you: You don't have to sit in the middle of a boring lecture for 50 minutes to learn something.

This would be the proverbial lesson in the justice system.

Since I last appeared on this page, I have violated a law and have been arraigned.

Now it doesn't really matter if I shot somebody, or if I was in a city park after hours, or if a Lincoln police officer just happened to ticket me for trespassing by parking at the University Towers lot; I violated the law.

This meant a lot of little things to big old me.

Upon issuance of the ticket, it meant that somehow, I had to get out of this bind. It might mean some serious cash. It could possibly mean some time in the slammer, and it definitely meant I would have a police record.

I pleaded with the officer to give me a warning, but he insisted, in a friendly manner, I might add, that warnings had failed. I insisted, also in a friendly manner, that a warning would not fail in my case.

He requested that maybe I should keep silent.

"Can I see some ID?" he said authoritatively.

He hated me, I could tell. His snide attitude . . . I knew he wanted to cuff me.

My insides became heavy and I couldn't keep still.

"Are you going to arrest me?"

"No, I'm going to issue you a ticket for . . ."

I gave a heavy blink.

At that moment, I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior.

"So how much is this going to cost me?"

"Well, the maximum penalty is \$500 and/or three months in jail."

Just then my eyes began to water. They just watered -- I didn't cry.

That cop didn't understand me. He treated me like a common criminal. I had never broken the law before, or at least I had never been caught for breaking the law before.

"Geez," I mumbled.

I never even shopped the regulation candy bar from the 7-11 store when I was a kid.

I begged (even groveled) a little more, but he didn't want me to be my own character witness. He just wanted me to shut up.

I tried to play on his sympathies.

"You don't want to be responsible for a student being taken out of

school, do you?" I whimpered.

I don't know why I would have to leave school for a ticket, but it sounded good, I guess. Anyway, I had finally broken the copper down -- he grinned.

"Oh, I didn't realize you were in school."

He held out the white slip of paper and a pen to me.

"Could you please sign here . . . your court date is . . . Do you want that for 9 a.m. or 2 p.m.?"

"9 a.m.," I said.

With that he gave me the ticket and I went on my criminal way.



I wondered where I could get legal help at midnight. I called my best friend in Omaha, but she's not a lawyer, majoring in law or even studying law. I just wanted to make sure that someone would come visit me when I was old and rotting in the Lancaster County Jail.

The next day, I made an appointment with Legal Services, one of those lovely services which the Association of Students of the University of Nebraska allocates student fees to.

It would be a week before I could get in to see an attorney.

It was like waiting an eternity, a lifetime. Day became night, night became day, and the week passed slowly.

After speaking with the attorney at Legal Services, I probably should have waited a lifetime, perhaps an eternity before consulting with the office.

First of all, the attorney expected me to know everything about the law. I love it when people assume that you should automatically know things that it took three years of schooling for them to comprehend.

After explaining the circumstances, the attorney listed the options and basically said that my penalty would depend on the judge.

Oh good, so my fate was resting on whether or not someone had burned the judge's toast before my arraignment.

Now that's justice.

I left there feeling more distraught. Why didn't I know someone in the penal system? I was really a criminal. It didn't matter that I was

wrong, so long as I got out of it.

I went and got my measles shot and thought it all over. Two shots in one day. This called for a trip to the ice cream store. Then I went to the Daily Nebraskan. Then I went home. I wandered about for another few days and finally decided to talk to city attorney.

After discussing the fact that I had no money, he reassured me that since it was my first offense, I wouldn't be severely penalized and the chance of serving a jail term was about as remote as remote could get.

Feeling a little more at ease, I went home and got some rest. It had been weeks.

Judgment Day finally arrived. Courtroom 12 in the County-City Building, 555 S. 10th St., was a coliseum, especially at 9 a.m.

All I could think of was Judge Wapner -- I had to keep myself amused.

Since I was told that the cases were heard in alphabetical order, I assumed that I would be the third person -- not the 13th.

"Lisa Donovan."

I approached the front of the room. The announcement pierced through every one of my aching muscles. My hands became balmy as the police report was read. My eyes twitched and my forehead wrinkled. I stood before the judge.

As the prosecutor read aloud the police report, I wanted to turn and slap him. Instead, I just stood there frozen beneath the lights and a slow-turning ceiling fan.

"How do you plead?"

The words quietly, shamefully passed through my lips.

"Guilty."

The judge looked over the top of his glasses and suggested that the city would like me to use its parking garages, and assessed me a \$10 fine.

I again reaffirmed my acceptance of Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior.

The bailiff ushered me out and as I dipped into my pocket I learned many valuable lessons: Society makes a set of rules, and if you disobey, you pay the price. If you don't want to pay the price, don't get caught.

Weighing the learning experiences, I think next time I'll stick to the boring, 50-minute lecture.

Donovan is a junior news-editorial major, and a Daily Nebraskan arts and entertainment senior reporter and editorial columnist.

opinion READER

Lighten up fellas, everyone is too tense

I have been noticing a growing problem on campus as of late: Everybody is so tense that they can't stand each other.

A good example of this is Nels Forde. This man needs to lighten up. Because people have different beliefs from you does not instantly make them bad or deem them to hell.

I'm no Bible whiz, but it seems to me that I read once "Judge not and you shall not be judged." I suggest a vacation for Forde; two weeks in the sun on a beach might help you unwind.

George Kerr (Daily Nebraskan, May 3) is the kind of person who is actually concerned when someone

bangs their shin on a coffee table. I myself, on the other hand, have to excuse myself because I am usually laughing so hard. Get a sense of humor.

I thought the Daily Half-asskin (May 1) was just what we needed, since we all are so uptight on this campus right now.

Kerr, you really should try laughter, it really does cure what ails you. It also helps meeting women.

Maybe you and Forde should join each other for that vacation. Lighten up, fellas.

Bob Archibald
senior
marketing